

Design Out Crime - Supplementary Note

DS – 24/01/2025

Thames Valley Police's Consultation Response

The Designing Out Crime Officer welcomes the removal of the Hyde End access and is also in agreement with the inclusion of a pre-commencement condition requiring the submission and approval of an Access and Security Strategy.

However, even with such a condition, he remains concerned with a number of elements of the design which could be improved to create a safer and more secure site:

- There remains no natural surveillance of the main vehicular access point from the school (particular from the reception area)
- The additional access from the footpath in the north west corner of the site is out of view of the school building
- The corner of the building which faces the vehicular entrance to the site should be protected from vehicles by bollards and details should be included.

He accepts however that an appropriate access and security strategy, with suitable access control measures, will help to mitigate the above issues.

Response

The project has yet to identify the operator of the school. The future operator will be responsible for the safe running of the school and their input and 'buy-in' into the access and security arrangements at the site will be vital if they are to be successfully enacted. Whilst the concerns of the Designing Out Crime Officer are acknowledged, as he also points out appropriate access control measures, as can be agreed via a pre-commencement planning condition, will help to mitigate them. It therefore remains the position of the project that such matters can reasonably be worked up in more detail at a later date, in conjunction with the Designing Out Crime Officer, and once the project has had an opportunity to appropriately engage with the future operator of the site.

Main Vehicle Access Point

The school has been designed to have its main access and defensible space immediately to the front, directly presenting to Fullbrook Avenue. Anyone wanting to physically enter the school building and teaching areas will need to pass through that controlled area. Access into that space will be controlled by gates and intercoms, connected direct into the school office. The office has been located specifically to optimise control over that defensible area.

In designing the school a balance has been struck between various competing objectives, including the following:

- The need for a safe environment for future users;
- The requirement to meet the DfE standard requirements, including a requirement to have segregated play areas directly linked to the teaching spaces to which they relate;
- The constraints imposed by having to tie into the highways and drainage infrastructure already constructed by the wider development – effectively fixing the vehicular access point into the site;
- The townscape benefits of the building continuing the building line of the adjacent Fullbrook Avenue properties and presenting a strong visual presence along the street frontage;

- The planning requirement to provide on-site visitor parking spaces and areas for servicing vehicles to manoeuvre safely within the site; and
- The potential for dual community use of the hall and/or MUGA outside of school hours and access arrangements for such that wouldn't necessarily compromise the security of the wider school facilities.

Each of these elements have informed the design and layout of the development. Whilst the office may only have limited direct line of sight of the vehicular entrance, the area around the vehicular entrance and parking area could reasonably be provided with lighting and CCTV to ensure good levels of surveillance. The CCTV could feed directly into the school office where suspicious activity could be identified, monitored and responded to as appropriate.

It is also the case that the site access is also already overlooked by adjacent residential properties, providing a natural surveillance of the space and discouraging anti social behaviour.

Gates will also be provided at the main vehicle access that will allow the school the opportunity to completely secure the site when necessary. The gates will be closed when the school is not in use. There would also be an option to provide a barrier and intercom access across the entrance to further control vehicles entering the site; although such measures might be disproportionate to the identified concerns.

North West Access

The access point from the footpath in the north west corner of the site is intended to allow access to the cycle parking at the rear of the school. It is envisaged that the gates will remain locked other than at drop off and pick up times and that during those times the points could be 'manned' if considered necessary. If the access point does prove an ongoing issue, then there is an option to lock the access permanently and utilise the alternative access points to the cycle parking areas instead.

The detail around how this access point will be used and managed can be worked up in more detail once an operator of the site is appointed. This detail can then be included / agreed in the Access and Security Strategy.

Bollards to Protect the Building

The recommendation for bollards to protect the building is noted. There is no reason why the location and specification of such bollards cannot be agreed at a later date under the Access and Security Strategy.